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'Joint Operation' veterans event to be held in Knox County

"Joint Operation," a free event to provide veterans and their families with a one-stop shop to access local resources and services, will be held in Knoxville on Wednesday, July 19, at The Jacob Building at Chilhowee Park. The event is sponsored

by the offices of U.S. Senators Bob Corker and Lamar Alexander, U.S. Congressman Jimmy Duncan, Knoxville Mayor Madeline Rogers, and Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett.

"Joint Operation is a one-stop shop to make it easier for

veterans to get the help they need and will bring more than 70 organizations under one roof to answer questions and offer assistance," said Corker. "We are truly inspired by how the community is coming together to help those who have served

our country and also appreciate the assistance we have received from Senator Alexander, Congressman Duncan, and Mayors Rogers and Burchett."

Joint Operation is open to all Tennessee veterans and their families and will feature more

than 70 agencies and organizations with information on a number of resources, including: VA claim assistance, vocational rehabilitation, education, employment, mental health, housing, legal assistance and much more.

McWherter Park may get a 20-year lease

By Mike Steely
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One of Knoxville's most unusual city parks got a 20-year lease from the state in council action Thursday.

The Governor Ned McWherter and Riverside Landing Park began in 1993 in honor of the former Tennessee governor. The park is located beneath the South Knoxville or Fort James White Parkway Bridge and consists of just over four acres of state-owned property.

The 20-year lease, which will replace the already expired agreement between the city and the Tennessee Department of Transportation, won't cost the city any local funds. The city agree to maintain the park during those years.

Currently the park, seldom used by local residents except for parking under the span, has a fishing pier, a boat ramp, picnic tables and a playground. The dock at the landing is owned and maintained by the Knoxville Rowing Association.

The park, at 1648 Riverside Drive, is currently the eastern end of James White Greenway which stretches west to the Neyland Greenway. The park also has a connection to the Morristown Greenway and eventually plans call for a connection atop the bridge to the South Waterfront and Will Skelton Greenway.



PHOTO BY MIKE STEELY

Charles Tallent fishes for catfish as other men prepare to launch their boat. Tallent said he often fishes from the pier at Gov. Ned McWherter Park on Riverside Drive. The city has agreed extend a 20-year lease with the state for the 4-acre park, just below the James White Parkway bridge.

6th District Candidate Forum tonight

By Mike Steely
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On the heels of a poorly attended Candidate Expo there is a growing effort to turn out the vote by several organizations. With more than two dozen candidates seeking the five open offices on city council there's also a fear, by some, that the 6th District might be won by a non-African American candidate.

Today at 6 p.m. at the CWA building, at 1415 Elm Street, the local Democrats are holding a 6th District City Council Candidates Forum and all candidates, regardless of party affiliation, have been invited to attend as well as the general public. While the city election is officially non-partisan there are strong undercurrents of both parties.

Tonight's forum may see the

following 6th District candidates attend and speak: Joyce Brown, John A. Butler, Maurice L. Clark, Sr., Michael Covington, Charles Frazier, David Gillette, Zimabaw W. Matavou, Gwen McKenzie, Jennifer Montgomery, Damon Rawls, Kennie Riffey, Shawnee Rios and Brandy Slaybaugh.

Terry Shaw will host the event. Shaw told The Focus that all the candidates except Covington have accepted an invitation to the event. Covington declined because he had another commitment.

The city's "Go Vote! Knoxville" initiative, kicked off recently by Mayor Madeline Rogers, also has an event tonight at 5:30 at the South Knoxville Community Center at 522 Maryville Pike. The mayor and current council wants "robust" participation in the August Election. Early voting

starts August 9th.

The top two vote getters in the Primary Election will go on to the November 7th General Election. Voters will be replacing five council members, in District 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6, who are term-limited.

The "Go Vote!" campaign moves to the Deane Hill Recreation Center on July 17, then to the Melton Roberts Recreation Center on July 20th and to Cumberland Estates Recreation Center on July 24th. On July 25 the effort moves to the John T. O'Connor Senior Center and then to the Christenberry Community Center on September 7.

There will be free pizza and snacks at the Go Vote! meetings, as well as family-friendly games and activities. The Knox County Election Commission

will provide voter information, register new voters and demonstrate how to cast a ballot using its voting machines. Candidates will be introduced, and voters will have opportunities to talk one-on-one with them. The Young at Heart group will bake treats for the July 10 meeting.

Several candidates have kicked off their campaigns recently and many of them turn up at various city, neighborhood and organization meetings whether to events are in their districts or not. While only the voters in each of the five districts will choose the top two candidates everyone who is registered to vote in the city will vote on each of the two district candidates for the five seats in the General Election.

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Beer sales granted for special events at Suttrees Landing, Baker Creek Preserve

By Mike Steely
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The Knoxville City Council zipped through its agenda in less than an hour Thursday with many items passing without discussion. The council, meeting on Thursday because their regular meeting would have been on the July 4th holiday, passed ordinances dealing with sidewalk street closings, changes in the beer ordinance, and a rezoning on East Martin Mill for a planned residential development with 30 units per acre.

To permit the development on East Martin Mill Pike and Lippencott Street by ECG Martin Mill LP the council agreed with the planning commission and amended the South City Sector Plan from Medium Density and Mixed-Use Special District to High Density Residential. The immediate zoning was changed from C-4 Commercial and Arterial Commercial to RP-2 Planned Residential.

The 6.4 acre tract is vacant land and located near Chapman Highway.

Beer Board Chair Brenda Palmer had several beer related items on the agenda for First Reading including the compensation of the permit hearing officer and moved to make one of the ordinances considered on "emergency." She sought to permit concession and consumption of beer for special events at Suttrees Landing's festival lawn and at Baker Creek Preserve.

Normally beer is not permitted in city parks but Palmer noted that permits may be issued for special events and her request was approved because the special events were already planned and will take place before the council meets again.

Council attorney Rob Frost said the rules on ordinances' first and second readings require a 14 day separation but, given that Thursday's meeting

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